

# Implementation Plan *for the* Child Welfare Services Workload Study

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California Department of Social Services  
California Health and Human Services Agency  
State of California

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*In consultation with  
CWS Stakeholders Group, Human Resources Subcommittee*

*June 15, 2002*





March 15, 2002

TO: HONORABLE DEBORAH ORTIZ, Chair  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

HONORABLE DION ARONER, Chair  
Assembly Human Services Committee

HONORABLE STEVE PEACE, Chair  
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee

HONORABLE JENNY OROPEZA, Chair  
Assembly Budget Committee

FROM: RITA SAENZ, Director

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILD  
WELFARE SERVICES WORKLOAD STUDY

I am pleased to submit the Department's implementation plan for recommendations in the Child Welfare Services Workload Study as required by Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10609.6.

This plan was developed in consultation with a diverse group of experts who served on the Human Resources Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group. Participants included representatives of groups named in the statute as well as other stakeholders who share a keen interest in ensuring that California's children have safe, stable and permanent homes. I have attached a copy of the document prepared for me by the Human Services Subcommittee for use in our deliberations. The Department's plan is the result of our consideration of the recommendations from the subcommittee and our assessment of what can be done now and in the near future given our current budget realities.

My staff and I are available to discuss any aspect of this plan with you in greater detail. Please call me at (916) 657-2598 if you have any comments and questions.

# Implementation Plan for the Child Welfare Services Workload Study Recommendations *August 29, 2001*

## Background and Reason for Report

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10609.6 (added by Assembly Bill 2876; Chapter 108, Statutes of 2000) requires the California Department of Social Services, in consultation with a task force of specified members, to develop a plan to implement the recommendations of the *Child Welfare Services Workload Study* that was released by Governor Davis in May 2000.

The statute specifies that the task force membership include the director or her designee, representatives from the Department of Finance, the County Welfare Directors Association, the California State Association of Counties, a child welfare services consumer, a children's advocacy organization, and a child welfare social worker organization.

The Department incorporated this effort into the larger Child Welfare Stakeholders Group by forming a Human Resources Subcommittee that included the required members as well as other stakeholders. The director asked this diverse group of experts to advise her on how the California Department of Social Services should apply the findings from the Study to policies and practices for ensuring that the State's children grow up in safe, stable and permanent homes. The Subcommittee members presented a draft of its proposed implementation plan at a Roundtable session of the Stakeholders Summit on May 11, 2001 and gathered the views of approximately 100 other stakeholders. They subsequently incorporated these comments into the attached document, the *Proposed Implementation Plan for the Recommendations from the Child Welfare Services Workload Study*.

The Subcommittee's recommendations will continue to be reviewed by the Department and considered both as part of the Department's day-to-day business and in the redesign of the Child Welfare Services program currently underway with Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group. Each area of the proposed plan has been assigned to functions within the Department where the suggested action steps will be incorporated into existing work to continually develop and improve services for families and children.

At this point, the Department wishes to highlight some of the major proposed action steps that it will be taking as a result of the Subcommittee's work. The Subcommittee's proposals are aligned with the five major areas of the *Workload Study* findings, and the Department's implementation plan corresponds to this order of presentation.

## Improving Work Measurement and Workload/Caseload Standards

The Department will work closely with the County Welfare Directors Association to consider how to best address the Subcommittee's proposal for Counties to develop multi-year plans that describe how they will use their allocations for the Child Welfare Services program. The plans would necessarily be connected to current county-state efforts that are underway to ensure accountability for the outcomes of services to families and children and consistent with the Department's approved federal funding under Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Department's budget and program operations staff will take lead responsibility for this area of the implementation plan and involve representatives from the County Welfare Directors Association in the process.

The Department is reviewing the implications and viability of using an incremental approach to achieving the "minimum standards" for Social Workers' caseloads as suggested in the *Workload Study*. The schedule of reductions proposed by the Subcommittee would provide for an immediate decrease in caseload standards starting with the current funding level as a base, rather than the current caseload standards as a base. The former approach would require additional funding the current year budget, and the latter approach puts the state at the 2002-2003 standards based on an incremental reduction of 20 percent per year toward the minimum standard. Given the current economic environment, the Department is not able to recommend implementing the Subcommittee's approach to caseload reduction at this time.

## Better Meeting Staff Tenure and Training Needs

The Department agrees that more needs to be done to strengthen the skills of Social Workers. The Department will work with the Stakeholders Group to implement the Subcommittee's proposal to encourage and promote service teams led by social workers. Our goal is to have social workers be responsible for what they do best: assessment, case planning and ongoing oversight of the services provided to families and children. The other team members such as public health nurses, case aides, paralegals, paraprofessionals and support staff would carry out responsibilities that correspond to their respective training and experience in serving families and children.

The California Social Work Education Center and Assembly Member Dion Aroner have established an advisory group to address this issue as well. The Department serves on this advisory committee and also participates on the Steering Committee of the Social Work Education Center. We will bring forward the Subcommittee's proposed action steps to these bodies in the development of strategies to achieve the goal of successful recruitment, retention, training and support of social work staff. As an initial step, we have contracted with Cooperative Personnel Services to assist in the recruitment of Social Workers in the 30 counties served by this organization.

## Continued Improvements in Budget Methodology

The Department will work closely with the County Welfare Directors Association both in the distribution of existing funds and in maximizing access to additional resources that support the achievement of our mission, especially as we develop the redesign of the Child Welfare Services program.

The Department agrees with the Subcommittee's observation that County-State communications have improved considerably over the past two years regarding budgeting methodologies, defined as the formulas by which funds are distributed among the counties. We commit to continuing this working relationship on behalf of the families and children we serve.

In addition to focusing on the distribution of funds, the Department is exploring alternative funding strategies through the work of the Flexible Funding Subcommittee of the Stakeholders Group. This Subcommittee is exploring ways to access additional funds from federal and other sources to improve services to families and children.

## Developing and Putting Best Practices to Work

During the upcoming year the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group will produce a new design for Child Welfare Services based on its finding from its first year of fact-finding and deliberations. We anticipate that this redesign will establish many "promising practices" to ensure safety, permanence and well-being for the children of California, practices that we will want to carefully test out and evaluate consistent with the Subcommittees recommendations.

The Department agrees with the Subcommittee's observation that until new social work practices are tested and evaluated they should be cast as "promising practices" rather than "best practices." The Department will develop protocols for the management of pilot projects so that promising practices can be evaluated and found effective, in need of adjustment or unsuccessful. Information on those practices that do improve outcomes for families and children will be made available statewide through conferences, seminars, training and informal gatherings.

The Division of Children and Family Services within the Department will consider incorporating the findings from pilot projects into policies and guidelines, involving the agencies that operated pilot projects in this effort so that the expertise from the field is included in the final product. Subsequent evaluation criteria for pilot projects will contain questions that address the suitability of going statewide.

## Better Use of Data and Related Research

The Department, in collaboration with the County Welfare Directors Association, established the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System Oversight Committee to monitor the development and implementation of the system so that it supports achievement of program goals and to make policy decisions regarding the operation of the system. This committee considered the recommendations presented in the *Workload Study* in developing the Strategic Plan for the system. Due to current priorities in maintaining the system, the recommendations for generating aggregated data are seen as particularly valuable to the program at this time, and those requiring enhanced functionality and forecasting will be considered at a later time.

As the Subcommittee points out, the Department and counties currently are taking advantage of existing functionality of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System as a tool to inform management about caseload characteristics, program trends and outcomes for families and children we serve. The Department will continue to support the use of the system through technical assistance and training.

## Conclusion

The Department looks forward to drawing from the Human Resources Subcommittee's proposals in our day-to-day responsibilities for Child Welfare Services as well as in our strategic planning efforts now underway with the help of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group.

The Department commends Subcommittee members for a quality product and for their commitment to promoting safe, stable and permanent families for the children of California.







# Proposed Implementation Plan

for recommendations from the

## Child Welfare Services Workload Study

*Submitted by*

The Human Resources Subcommittee  
Child Welfare Services  
Stakeholders Group

*to*

Rita Saenz, Director,  
California Department of Social Services

*May 31, 2001*

## Child Welfare Services Workload Study Proposed Implementation Plan

### REASON FOR REPORT

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10609.5 (added by Senate Bill 2030; Chapter 785, Statutes of 1998) directed the California Department of Social Services to assess the effort needed to fulfill the statutory and regulatory requirements for Child Welfare Services and to make recommendations regarding what constitutes a reasonable workload for county social workers in this field.

The ensuing *Child Welfare Services Workload Study* was released by Governor Davis in May 2000, and contains recommendations in five major areas:

- Work measurement and workload/caseload standards.
- Staff tenure and training needs.
- Budget methodology.
- Best practices.
- Management uses of data and related research recommendations.

Assembly Bill 2876 (Chapter 108, Statutes of 2000) created Section 10609.6 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requiring the department, in consultation with a task force, to develop a plan to implement the recommendations of the *Child Welfare Services Workload Study*. The plan is to be submitted to the policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature on or before June 30, 2001.

The statute specified that the task force membership was to include the director or her designee, representatives from the Department of Finance, the County Welfare Directors Association, the California State Association of Counties, a child welfare services consumer, a children's advocacy organization, and a child welfare social worker organization.

The department incorporated this effort into the larger Child Welfare Stakeholders Group by forming a Human Resources Subcommittee. In addition, the Subcommittee presented the proposed action steps to implement the study during a Roundtable session of the Stakeholders Summit on May 11, 2001 and gathered additional input from approximately 100 other stakeholders.

This *Proposed Implementation Plan for Recommendations from the Child Welfare Services Workload Study* reflects the Human Resources Subcommittee's suggested actions and is hereby presented to Rita Saenz, Director of the California Department of Social Services, for her consideration in formulating the Administration's approach to addressing each of the recommendations contained in the Study.

## Historical Context

In the early 1980's, California implemented the federal Adoption and Child Welfare Services Act (Public Law 96-272). While there have been several amendments to this federal child welfare reform statute over the years, it still serves as the basis for child welfare services statewide. Funding for child welfare services in support of this law is determined through the state budget process that establishes the amount of State General Fund dollars allotted for this purpose. The State General Fund dollars are then leveraged with matching federal and county dollars to produce the total statewide resource level.

The budget allocation methodology used to distribute these funds to the counties has evolved over the years. In the 1970's and through fiscal year 1983-84, the formula was based on the equal weighting of three factors: (1) the number of children in each county; (2) the number of children receiving assistance payments; and (3) the number of children in foster care.

Beginning in fiscal year 1984-85, the number of children served in the various components of the Child Welfare Services program (Emergency Response, Family Maintenance, Family Reunification and Permanency Planning) were weighted as ten percent of the allocation. The original three factors were then weighted at 30 percent each.

Within the remaining ten percent for Child Welfare Services, each component was given its own weight based on the number of children that could be served by one Social Worker (specifically, 15.8 children for Emergency Response; 35 children for Family Maintenance; 27 children for Family Reunification; and 54 children for Permanency Planning).

Gradually the Child Welfare program components became an increasing percentage of the weighting factors, and in fiscal year 1989-90 they accounted for the entire allocation formula. Since that time, additional allocations have been given to supplement the caseload-driven formula, such as holding counties harmless for lowering the number of children needing child welfare services and augmentations in response to increased requirements for serving children and families. Another case weighting factor of 322.5 children per Social Worker was added to reflect the workload involved in closing out referrals to county child abuse hotlines that did not need further response.

In the nearly 20 years since the current model was adopted, the requirements of the Child Welfare Services program have increased in both their number and complexity as a result of numerous legislative, demographic, programmatic, administrative, and technical changes that have occurred. Counties, labor unions and advocates have all called for a realistic examination of the resources needed to carry out the program thoroughly and effectively in light of the funding provided.

Welfare and Institutions Code 10609.5 (added in 1998) directed the California Department of Social Services to work with others involved in the Child Welfare Services program to study the effort needed to fulfill the statutory and regulatory requirements for Child Welfare Services, and to make recommendations regarding what constitutes a reasonable workload for county Social Workers in this field.

The department contracted with the American Humane Association to conduct the study under the direction of the department and workload study committee. *The Child Welfare Services Workload Study* was released by Governor Davis in May 2000, and contained recommendations in five major areas of concern: (1) work measurement and workload/caseload standards; (2) staff tenure and training needs; (3) budget methodology; (4) best practices; and (5) management uses of data and related research recommendations. The recommendations also included a suggestion for periodic workload studies in the future.

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10609.6 (added in 2000) required an implementation plan for the Study recommendations. The director formed a Human Resources Subcommittee within the department's Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group to offer advice on actions that should be taken on the recommendations. The Subcommittee included representatives from organizations and groups specified in the law. In addition, the membership included a broader segment of the Child Welfare Services community so that input on how to address the recommendations could be more extensive.

A list of the Human Resources Subcommittee members may be found on page 18 of this document.

Below are the proposed action steps that the Human Resources Subcommittee respectfully submits to Rita Saenz, Director of the California Department of Social Services, for her consideration in the development of the Administration's plan for implementing the recommendations.

## Proposed Action Steps

The Human Resources Subcommittee has organized its response so that it corresponds with the recommendations found under each of the five major areas of the *Child Welfare Services Workload Study*. Each topic area is identified, and the relevant recommendations from the study are displayed in a box format. The proposed action steps relating to the recommendations are then presented, followed by a discussion of the Subcommittee's rationale.

- Area 1 – Work Measurement and Workload/Caseload Standards

Study Recommendation 1.1 – Consider implementing the minimum standards for case-related time as soon as possible for at least some program areas.

Study Recommendation 1.2 – Review the optimum standards and prioritize them for possible long-term implementation based on achievement of outcome criteria.

## Proposed Action Steps

- Immediately adopt the SB 2030 Workload Study Recommendations for minimum caseload standards and phase in augmentations at 20% per year, to reach the minimum standards by FY 2005-2006.
- Revise the budget baselines to account for time lapse since the study, by beginning the augmentations from an adjusted base which incorporates the Governor's 18% augmentation disbursed during State Fiscal Year 2000-2001.
- Continue of the cost sharing arrangement that currently governs the emergency workload relief augmentation that has been provided for the past three fiscal years.
- Maximize the flexibility to meet needs through local control, by managing accountability and statewide CDSS oversight through 5-Year County Plans, with technical assistance for the plan development provided by the department.
- Direct the Child Welfare Services Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup to evaluate accountability using federal outcomes as a starting point.
- Direct the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group to develop an implementation plan for the recommendation regarding "Optimum Standards" during FY 2001-02 and to develop a methodology for defining and accurately measuring the workload impact associated with services requiring optimum standards. The plan should be tied to data from the Outcomes and Accountability Workgroup and "best practices" studies currently underway.

## Rationale for Proposed Action Steps

### Five-Year Strategy

After careful consideration, the Human Resources Subcommittee believed a realistic approach had to be taken to incorporate the findings of the study into child welfare practice. It is clear that the State does not have the immediate financial resources to reduce the child welfare caseloads to the minimums recommended by the Study. Further, the State does not currently have the necessary number of qualified, trained social workers ready to enter the child welfare field. Given these considerations, the 5-year strategy was adopted as a realistic approach.

Governor Davis augmented the child welfare budget approximately 18% during FY 2000-2001, and this action could be construed to result in an 18% reduction of child welfare caseloads across the state. However, the budget augmentation did not necessarily result in statewide caseload reductions because by the time the study was released the counties' caseloads had already grown beyond the baseline numbers used in the study. For this reason, the Subcommittee is recommending that the augmentation be incorporated as part the base child welfare budget.

The progression of the proposed 5-year caseload standards phase-in is depicted in the table below.

Proposed five year progression to achieve minimum standards							
Child Welfare Service Components	1998 Caseload Standard	2000-01 18% Augmented Standard	2001-02 Added 20% Plan Standard	2002-03 Added 20% Plan Standard	2003-04 Added 20% Plan Standard	2004-05 Added 20% Plan Standard	2005-06 Added 20% Plan Standard
Hotline Screening	322.50	285	251.2	217.4	183.6	149.8	116
Emergency Response	15.8	15.3	14.85	14.39	13.94	13.48	13.03
Family Maintenance	35	31.25	27.84	24.43	21.02	17.61	14.2
Family Reunification	27	25	23.16	21.23	19.35	17.46	15.58
Permanency Planning	54	48.5	43.54	38.58	33.61	28.65	23.69



## State/County Share of Costs

Under this proposed approach to caseload reduction, counties would be responsible for funding the full amount necessary to match the base CWS allocation (e.g., the allocation generated by the existing budgeting yardstick), and the state would fully fund the remaining nonfederal share of program costs.

As part of the state-county “realignment” legislation enacted in 1991, counties received a 30 percent share of the nonfederal Child Welfare Services costs and also received revenue from the state to theoretically reimburse counties for this new financial obligation.

Beginning in fiscal year 1998-99, in recognition of the workload crisis in the program, the Legislature and the Administration have provided counties with “emergency workload augmentations.” When the Legislature and the Administration debated the first of these emergency augmentations they agreed to provide the additional funds without any county share of cost, provided counties first fully fund their matching requirements for their base programs. This arrangement recognizes that the funds provided to counties under the realignment legislation cover only the base program. Requiring counties to match the workload relief augmentation would have imposed a significant new cost on financially-limited counties with no new funding source.

The Legislature and the Administration understood that a county matching requirement would have resulted in a situation where counties with stronger economies would have been more likely to access the augmentation, whereas economically disadvantaged counties would have been less likely to do so, thus exacerbating service inequities across the state.

The Human Resources Subcommittee believes that the reasoning behind the existing cost sharing arrangement for the emergency workload relief funds is as compelling today as it was in 1998 and therefore recommends its continuation.

## County Plans for Five-year Phase-in

The proposal to require each county to submit a plan regarding how it will reduce Social Workers’ caseloads and workloads meets the need to monitor effectiveness in implementing the Study recommendations, while providing enough flexibility for counties to meet their unique needs.

In order to ensure that local areas are able to utilize these augmentations to meet the unique needs of children and families in their community, each county would be required to submit a County Child Welfare Services Workload Plan. The Plan must establish a five-year vision and framework for improved service delivery, and annual action plans addressing the specific processes to be used to achieve the desired outcomes.

The State will provide a County Plan template, training, and technical assistance to help counties in the development of their plans that will include answers to the following questions:

1. Local Stakeholder Planning Process: How has your county sought involvement in the planning process from a broad base of stakeholders? This should include, but not be limited to, labor representatives, partnering agencies, clients, private and community based organizations. This planning development process must demonstrate a clear effort to involve stakeholders as strategic partners.
2. Identified Needs: What service improvements are required to address the most critical needs of the children and families in the county? How have these critical needs been identified? What data supports the determination of these critical needs?
3. Historical Context: What has been done in the past to meet these critical needs, and specifically, how was the County's last augmentation used and what measurable improvements resulted from those strategies? What data or learning emerged that will help this augmentation meet these critical needs?
4. Broad five-year strategies: What are the vision, success indicators, broad strategies for improved Child Welfare services, projections of performance indicators to demonstrate improvements, and anticipated phases for measurable accomplishments over the next five years?
5. One-year action plan: What are the action steps, milestones, timeframes and monitoring processes that will be required annually throughout the five-year augmentation period? The first annual action plan must accompany the initial five-year County Plan.
6. Human resources, leadership and culture strategies: In order to ensure lasting improvements, how will county leadership build a workplace culture that both attracts and retains an adequate complement of trained and productive workers? Plans should outline initiatives designed to create an positive working environment, recruit needed staff, retain existing staff, provide effective training and meet infrastructure needs.
7. Budget: What is the projected budget for your county's child welfare program? (Consider the implications of Section 3.3 of the *Child Welfare Services Workload Study* for inclusion in the County Plan).
8. Performance Improvement and Accountability Methodologies: How were performance indicators selected and how are they linked to demonstrating that the identified need has been met? How will progress on these measures will be tracked and tested for efficacy throughout the five years?



## Optimum Standards

Many promising approaches to improving services for children and families are in pilot stages throughout the state and the country. Most have not been in effect long enough to produce clear conclusions regarding outcomes and cost effectiveness. It is clear, however, that most approaches to innovation and improvements in service delivery require a standard increase that approaches what the Child Welfare Services Workload Study calls “Optimum Standards.”

- Area 2 – Staff Tenure and Training needs

Study Recommendation 2.1 – Consider the need to adjust standards for non-case related time to address training and staff development needs.

Study Recommendation 2.2 – Devise and implement a special recruitment plan to address likely staff shortages.

## Proposed Action Steps

- Adjust caseload standards immediately for incumbent social workers on the job for less than one year to support workload requirements for non-case related work at 41.67 hours per trainee/month for one year.
- Direct the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group to determine during 2001-02 the necessary caseload adjustments to support the training needs of incumbent Social Workers and Social Work Supervisors.
- Acknowledge and actively support the counties' current efforts to address the social work staffing crisis, such as with innovative recruitment strategies and public awareness campaigns.
- Direct CWS Stakeholders Group to plan a statewide coordinated approach to supporting activities which increase public awareness of the need for child welfare social workers.
- Encourage and promote current county human resource practices that include use of service teams comprised of clerical personnel, case aides, professionals, paraprofessionals, and community organizations to optimize the use of resources.
- Acknowledge and support the continued work of the CWS Stakeholders Group Rules and Regulations Subcommittee in identifying regulatory barriers to the most effective and efficient organization of child welfare tasks and operations.
- Direct the Chancellors of the State Colleges and Universities and the California Community Colleges to work with the department, the California Social Work Education Center, the County Welfare Directors Association and the National Association of Social Workers to expand slots for all levels of social work education in response to the human resource staffing crisis.
- Direct education programs to recruit a diverse pool of social work students to reflect the diversity of California's population.
- Create a grant fund for county start-up activities that implement “best management practices,” such as those recognized by the California Eureka Award, to improve retention of social workers.
- Recognize and facilitate information sharing among counties on social work retention, including strategies that provide incentives for social workers interested in staying in line level positions, honoring years of experience and continued education.

## Rationale for Proposed Action Steps

### Training

The California Social Work Education Center has developed a competency-based curriculum for child welfare workers. The Center conducted an extensive review of existing curricula and determined training needs for social workers with less than six months of child welfare experience. The *Child Welfare Services Workload Study* revealed that new social workers spend an average of 11 hours per month in training. This amount of time is not adequate for social workers to be fully prepared to meet the needs of the job. The Human Resources Subcommittee supports the recommendations of the Center and encourages that social workers with less than six months experience receive 40 hours per month of training in the first year of employment, and that their case-related time is decreased accordingly. This proposed action would affect approximately ten percent of the current workforce.

### Recruitment & Retention

Child Welfare Services in California is facing a human resource crisis. Achieving our overall mission of providing CWS for California children and families requires innovation in all areas. Innovative recruitment and retention strategies are critical to maintaining an adequate supply of well trained and committed professionals to provide needed services. These innovations should include but not be limited to the following:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns**  
To improve public image and interest in the important contributions made by Child Welfare Services workers, the Administration and the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group should support, and encourage the Legislature and others to support, the efforts of the County Welfare Directors Association and the National Association of Social Workers to conduct public awareness campaigns.
- **Coordinated Social Work Education**  
The experience of counties and stakeholders strongly suggests that the education system has not kept abreast of contemporary social work practices and the competencies needed when a graduate enters the field. With the growing caseloads in child welfare and the expansion of social work programs in other public service areas, the capacity of growth in the social work profession has not kept up with the need, particularly in the child welfare arena. There is an immediate need for an increase in the capacity of the schools of social work to produce more social workers at the Bachelor and Master of Social Work level. The Human Resources Subcommittee supports the immediate expansion of social work slots at the state and private community colleges and universities in California.

Further, expanding the training programs that are funded by Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to include the Bachelor's as well as the Master's level would encourage more people from the community to consider social work as a career option. This approach may also be one of the ways to attract a more culturally diverse workforce.

- **Additional Human Resource Development Strategies**  
A large number of the professionals currently working in county child welfare agencies do not have a degree for a school of social work, but they have been educated in related disciplines. These individuals should be included in child welfare recruitment efforts.
- **Avoidance of Adverse Impact on Community Based Organizations**  
Both public and private child welfare agencies are currently struggling to meet their human resource needs. It is important to develop a sufficiently large pool of social workers so that all agencies are able to recruit and retain staff.
- **Retention Through Workplace Culture Improvements**  
The culture evident in the workplace of any organization is the greatest motivation for or deterrent to recruitment and retention of staff. A positive organizational climate involves low conflict, cooperation, role clarity and personal attention. Until the workplace culture is found by employees to be satisfying and supportive, as well as productive, any attempt at attracting staff will only be an investment in a short-lived “quick fix.” Such a climate builds long-term loyalty and job satisfaction that creates the necessary environment for ensuring high quality services and desired outcomes for children and families. In addition, satisfied workers stay on the job, thereby reducing recruitment and training costs.
- While some counties are already making good progress, many need support and technical assistance to begin improving workplace culture in areas such as:  
(1) human resources policies and procedures; (2) quality management practices; and (3) retention through incentives.

- Area 3 – Budget Methodology

Study Recommendation 3.1: The service-based budget methodology is the most practical and workable approach and should be continued.

Study Recommendation 3.2: The minimum standards service caseload factors as determined by the workload study should be used in place of the current standards.

Study Recommendation 3.3: Current budget methodology caseloads should be subject to additional specialized study to recognize the unique needs and additional time necessary to serve non-English speaking culturally diverse, and disabled or handicapped populations.

Study Recommendation 3.4: Adjustments for new staff training time needs should be addressed.

Study Recommendation 3.5: Minimum funding allocations, that have historically been used for very small counties reduce unessential administrative overhead and should be expanded to include additional small counties.

Study Recommendation 3.6: State funding for new child welfare programs, including new prevention and collaborative initiatives, should be considered.

Study Recommendation 3.7: A block grant methodology should be subject to further evaluation and considered for a limited pilot test.

Study Recommendation 3.8: Consideration should be given to reviewing current state and county cost sharing ratios.

Study Recommendation 3.9: Improve state and county budget communication.

## Proposed Action Steps

- Retain the service-based, Proposed County Administrative Budget methodology.
- In accordance with the proposals in response to the minimal caseload standards discussion above, the caseload factors identified in the study should be used.
- Direct the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group to consider additional caseload factors associated with populations such as non-English speaking, culturally diverse and disabled as part of its work on “optimum standards” discussed previously.
- Consider adjustments to reflect the time staff spend in training at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Retain minimum funding allocations that are used for very small counties and work with the County Welfare Directors Association to determine the desirability and feasibility of adding more counties to this group.
- Support the current efforts of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group to incorporate prevention and early interventions strategies into child welfare programs that are community-based.
- Support the work of the Flexible Funding Subcommittee of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group that is examining many budgeting methodologies, including block grant approaches.
- Retain current state and county cost-sharing ratios.
- Acknowledge that state and county budget communication has improved considerably over the past two years and urge all to continually improve working relationships in the interest of program improvement on behalf of the families and children served.

## Rationale for Proposed Action Steps

### Alignment of Budget Methodologies with Positive Outcomes

Budget methodologies should be aligned with program goals in order to achieve desired results for the families and children served by the Child Welfare Services program. The proposed action steps are in support of this fundamental belief and many can be integrated with existing efforts, particularly in the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group.

In order to maintain stability in the program, the current budget methodologies and cost sharing ratios should remain in place, pending the completion of the work in progress.

- Area 4 – Best Practices

Study Recommendation 4.1 – Comparability of local programs should be assessed before they are included in the same special study.

Study Recommendation 4.2 – For all special study subject areas, consideration should be given as to how long programs or policies have existed in each county being studied.

Study Recommendation 4.3 – Specific Recommendations for Each Best Practice Area:

4.3.1 Incorporate the emergency response and family maintenance workload standards for structured Decision Making on a county specific basis.

4.3.2 The Wraparound Program area could benefit from a longitudinal study that assesses short and long-term outcomes for families served in the programs, and methodologies should include staff and partner agency interviews.

4.3.3 Conduct a structured estimation time study for domestic violence programs that are supported under California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids auspices.

4.3.4 Conduct either a structured estimation or time log time study for Independent Living and add Probation and Post-Emancipation as units of service for measurement.

4.3.5 Multicultural/Multilingual issues would best be addressed by a longitudinal study that identifies and assesses best practices (the Santa Clara model is an example worth examining further).

4.3.6 Use structured estimation and a staff shadow method to study Healthy Start programs.

4.3.7 For Health and Educational Passports, conduct a lab study with a variety of cases using public health nurses and staff funded by the Child Health and Disability Prevention program and other funding sources.

4.3.8 Conduct a time study using counties who have implemented Family Group Decision Making and cases that are identified as practicing Family Group Decision Making using a best practice model.

4.3.9 Conduct a time study using a sample of counties and collect data from all staff involved in the Assessment of Relative Homes.

## Proposed Action Steps

- Establish a research and evaluation function to clarify a three to five year protocol for taking promising practices from pilot idea to scale.
- Create formulas to make pilot programs available statewide where needed.

### Rationale for Proposed Action Steps

#### Many *Promising* Practices

While the Study refers to a number of “best practices,” the term is somewhat misleading. Most practices referenced in the study are in pilot stages using very small numbers of clients. None of them have been followed for a sufficient time to demonstrate efficacy, and it is not clear how to take any of the pilots to scale considering the current workload situation.

Today there are many *promising* practices in various pilot stages throughout the State, as counties innovate in response to the current challenges facing Child Welfare Services. Further outcome studies and consistent protocols for expanding and transporting these models are needed as are formulas for assessing the caseload impact of these practices. Most best practices are difficult to implement under current and minimum caseload standards.

- Future actions in this area should focus on the following:
- Implementing successful pilots to scale on a statewide basis.
- Sharing lessons learned from both successful and not successful pilots, including what works and what does not work.
- Providing technical assistance to counties on promising practices.
- Identifying areas requiring further study.



- Area 5 – Management Use of Data and Related Research

Study Recommendation 5.1 – Management Uses of the Data

5.1.1 – Counties should consider using the formulas provided in the management of case assignment and monitoring to address workload equity.

Study Recommendation 5.2 – Additional Related Research Recommendations

5.2.1 Review the service categories used in the workload study and consider enhancements to the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System to capture data on all service categories.

5.2.2 Develop more capacity to generate routine Child Welfare Services/Case Management System data on case entries, duration and exits for all service categories.

5.2.3 Current efforts to develop outcome data for Child Welfare Services need to be integrated analytically with workload data and subsequent workload studies.

5.2.4 Consider vacancies in staffing and the effects on existing staff workload.

5.2.5 Develop a simulation model of Child Welfare Services basic services for forecasting purposes.

### Proposed Action Steps

- Acknowledge, encourage, and support counties in the continuing use of Child Welfare Services/Case Management System to improve their abilities to manage and monitor case assignments efficiently.
- Support the development of new Child Welfare Services/Case Management System automated tools that will help supervisors to fulfill their responsibilities for managing and monitoring case assignments.
- Consider staff vacancies and their corresponding impact on staff workload as a part of any new budget methodologies that are developed under study recommendation 3.7.
- Direct the Oversight Committee of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System to consider the Study Recommendations 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, and 5.2.5 in its strategic planning process that is currently underway.



## Rationale for Proposed Action Steps

### Management Practices

As discussed above under “recruitment and retention,” good management practices support a positive workplace culture. Equity and fairness are key to the maintaining such a culture and can be promoted through the use of management tools that make it easier to assign cases assignments based on objective criteria.

### Child Welfare Services Case/Management System

The Child Welfare Services/Case Management System Oversight Committee is considering these recommendations as part of its Child Welfare Services/Case Management System Strategic Planning process to be completed in Fall 2001. Some of the suggested uses of the system to generate reports on service categories, case flow activity, outcomes and simulation models are already possible (and, in fact, being done), while others would require changes in the functionality of the software. After the strategic plan is completed, the California Department of Social Services will seek approval from the federal Department of Health and Human Services for those elements determined to be appropriate for California’s system.

## Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group Human Resources Subcommittee Membership

### Co-Chairs

Karen Guckert	California Independent Public Employees Legislative Council
Kathleen Irvine	Kern County Department of Human Services

### Members

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Evelyn Aguilar	Breaking the Barrier
Wren Atilano-Bradley	Service Employees International Union, Local 535
Janet Atkins	Service Employees International Union, Local 535
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Susan Helland	Cooperative Personnel Services
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Marci Jenkins	Sonoma County Office of Education
Terry Kook	Stanislaus County Community Services Agency
Dan McQuaid	California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Frank Mecca	County Welfare Directors Association
Eleanor Moses	California Youth Authority
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Sylvia Pizzini	Children and Family Services Division, California Department of Social Services
Joni Pitcl	California Children's Lobby
Don Rascon	California Department of Finance
Michael Riley	Orange County Social Services Administration
Jeanne Smart	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
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Walter Vaughn	State Personnel Board
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**State of California**  
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